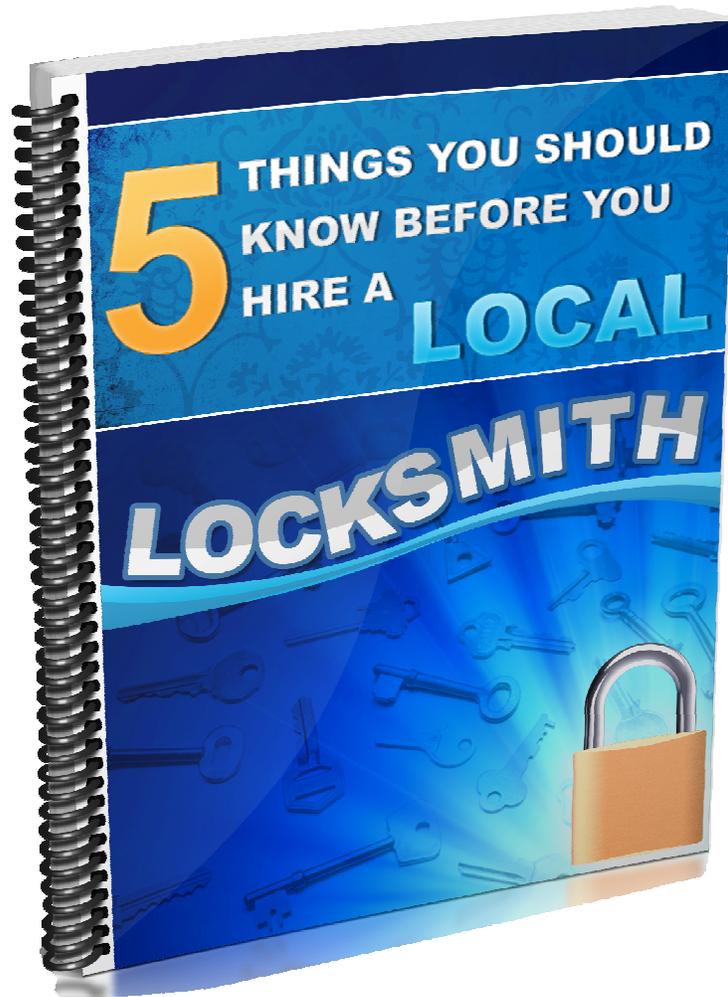


5 Things You Should Know Before You Hire a Local Locksmith

By: A-1 Locksmith LLC in Westwood, NJ



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Introduction

Locksmithing has been a recognized craft since the Middle Ages, and has grown over time to accommodate advances in technology, evolving into a highly specialized profession that is now regulated by the government and standardized by licensing and certification requirements. A locksmith must be knowledgeable and skilled in a wide array of proficiencies, some which you might be surprised to learn of. Are you in the market to enlist in the services of a locksmithing professional? If so, then you should prepare yourself by reading up on these five things you should know before you hire a locksmith, this report will reveal all.

To your success,

A-1 Locksmith

Types of Locksmiths

There are nearly sixty different types of locks, belonging to four different categories. There are also many different circumstances that require the use of locks, from office filing cabinets to security-grade dead bolts. For these reasons, it only makes sense that there are different types of locksmiths to suit the variety of locks and lock applications. What type of locksmith is right for your job? Here is a guide to the types of locksmiths:

- **Residential/commercial locksmiths.** These are the professionals you would contract to install high security dead bolts on external doors, as well as locks for windows, safes, filing cabinets, and more. Additionally, there are a number of residential/commercial locksmiths that choose to specialize in installing electronic components like alarm systems and door chimes.
- **Automobile locksmiths.** Whether your automobile uses a key-pad entry or a traditional lock, an automobile locksmith can help you gain entry in the event of a lockout, and can also perform more mechanical tasks like retrieving a jammed key from an ignition.
- **Emergency locksmiths.** In the case of an emergency (like locking your keys, and your dog, in the car, for example), then it is in your best interest to call an emergency locksmith. This type of locksmith is generally mobile (operating solely out of a company vehicle), and has all

the necessary tools on board for all types of emergencies. What's more is that emergency locksmiths are open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week . . . because you just never know when you will be faced with an emergency.

Services Offered by Locksmiths

As you now know, there are different types of locksmiths, and each type may specialize in specific services. You may be surprised, though, to know how very widely variant a locksmith's offerings can be. Locksmiths must have a broad range of knowledge and skills, to suit a variety of circumstances. Here is a description of the services offered by locksmiths:

- **Lockouts.** It seems that when people hear the word, "locksmith," they automatically think of locking themselves out of their home or automobile. And it is true that this is one of the most common reasons people hire locksmiths. In order to remedy your lockout, a locksmith may either pick your lock, or if that's not an option, drill your lock out and replace it with a new one. A locksmith's services also come in handy in the event of less traditional lockouts, like cabinet, drawer, and safe lockouts.
- **Lock installations.** As previously mentioned, there are about sixty different types of locks. A qualified locksmith should be knowledgeable enough to advise you on which lock is best for your circumstances, and as well should be able to install your lock of choice.

- **Electronics.** While not all locksmiths offer these services, there are a number of locksmith professionals that work with electronic components like keypad entries, security systems, door chimes, window alarms, and more.
- **Key grinding.** If you need to have keys made or changed on site, then your locksmith will be able to grind new keys for you, or reshape your existing keys to match your locks.
- **Lock modifications.** There are some cases in which a new lock is desired, but it is not necessary to spring for a new locking system. A locksmith may be able to modify your existing lock so that it is compatible with existing keys (called “rekeying”), or so that you can use it with altogether new keys.

How to Find Reputable Locksmiths in Your Area

When it comes to finding locksmiths, you should have no trouble finding numerous locksmith companies, all claiming to be the best and vying for your business. It is necessary that you screen a number of locksmiths to find the right fit for you. Unfortunately, having so many options can be confusing, and you may find it difficult to sort out the good from the bad. Here are some tips for how to find reputable locksmiths in your area:

- **Ask around.** Perhaps the best way to find a qualified locksmith you can trust is to ask people you know you can trust for a good recommendation. In addition to asking friends and family, don't forget that there are a number of local professionals who regularly use a locksmith's services and who can point you in the right direction. Approach building contractors, construction companies, and home security system retailers to ask who they use, themselves, and who they send their customers to.
- **Trade associations.** The Associated Locksmiths of America (ALOA) is an organization that maintains a database of qualified, active locksmith professionals. The ALOA will refer you to a locksmith in your area. Additionally, you may be able to find other, more local locksmith trade associations online, and obtain verified referrals through them.
- **Search online.** One of the easiest ways to find numerous local locksmiths is to conduct an Internet search. Just be aware that not all

locksmiths are created equal, and you will need to scale down your list of available options by way of careful research.

Screening Locksmiths Before You Hire Them

Once you have narrowed down your list of candidates for the job, it is time to take the appropriate steps toward choosing the best locksmith for your needs. Choosing a locksmith is a process, and will require some time and energy on your part. However, it is worth it to know that your locksmith of choice is reliable, competent, and trustworthy. Here is a guide to screening locksmiths before hire:

- **Online research.** There are a number of great Internet resources when it comes to checking out potential locksmiths for your job. Begin by visiting the Better Business Bureau website (bbb.org) to learn of any unresolved complaints. Then search for the locksmith through your local Consumer Protection Agency website (consumeraction.gov) and state Attorney General's office website (naag.org) to find out if the locksmith has any outstanding judgments or legal disputes.
- **Licensing.** Not all states require that locksmiths obtain licensing, but it pays for you to find a locksmith that is licensed. Because locksmiths must submit to a background screening and pass a proficiency examination in order to obtain licensing, this is a very relevant screening factor when it comes to finding a good locksmith.

- **Insurance.** Your locksmith of choice should hold minimum liability insurance, to protect you in the unfortunate event that your personal property incurs damages as the result of the locksmith's work. Ask to see proof of insurance before you hire a locksmith.
- **References.** Any reputable locksmith should be able to give you a list of references you can call on to find out more about the locksmith's workmanship, trustworthiness, customer service level, and reliability.

Common Locksmith Frauds and How to Avoid them

When you hire a locksmith, you are giving that person permission (and the ability) to gain entry into your automobile, home, or office. This is a serious situation that puts you in a vulnerable place, and unfortunately, there are individuals out there who prey on this vulnerability. Locksmith frauds have been making the news lately, and the victims are often left feeling scared, frustrated, and broke. Fortunately, there are some very common sense things you can do to protect yourself. Here are some common locksmith frauds and how to avoid them:

- **Call centers.** It is very easy to find a large number of locksmiths simply by conducting an online search or looking in your local yellow pages. What you need to know is that, in some cases, the local number you call to reach a locksmith in your area is actually routed to a call center

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hundreds of miles away. Call centers like this exist to find customers that they can then send to fake locksmiths in your area, who can then swindle you for cash.

- **Cash, up front.** Fake locksmiths operate by convincing the victims to give them a lump sum of cash, up front, before they will do any work. Once they have the cash in hand, they either leave before doing the work, do faulty work (to appear as though they are working), or leave the job unfinished.
- **Verifying the business address.** Fake locksmiths often use vacant lots or other business locations as front addresses, for the purpose of appearing legitimate. One of the simplest things you can do to verify that your call did not, in fact, go out to a distant call center is to ask for the business address while you are on the phone, and then verify that address online. You can do this very easily by plugging the address you were given and the phone number you used to contact the locksmith into a free Internet phone number/address match up service. If the phone number and address don't match up, then it is a good idea to move on.
- **The company vehicle.** Qualified, legitimate locksmiths should drive company vehicles that feature the company name and telephone number. Be wary of any locksmith who arrives at the job in an unmarked vehicle.

- **Identification.** Any reputable locksmith will volunteer identification as soon as arriving on the scene. Additionally, the locksmith should ask for your identification, to verify that you are who you claim to be (and the person with a legitimate right to access the property in question).
- **The final invoice.** When you first call a locksmith, you will be given a quote for the services you need. This quote should include any and all fees associated with the job. If a locksmith arrives on site with a final invoice that does not match the original quote, then that is a major red flag. Don't pay any fee that was not originally quoted to you, and make sure the final invoice is itemized to reflect the breakdown of costs (mileage, service, hardware, etc.) before you hand over any money.

Conclusion

A locksmith is responsible for some very important tasks – some in which your own safety is at stake. Not all locksmiths are created equal. You need a locksmith you can trust to be professional, reliable, and competent. Art Deco Lock & Safe is that company. Reach us by phone, at (201) 391-1177, or email: A-1@Westwoodlocksmith.org